October Gardening Guide 2010
By Patricia Porchey

Q: Water is more expensive here than it was up north. How can I use less water outside without growing a cactus garden?

A: There are many things you can do to conserve water in your landscape.

• Turn off your automatic sprinkler system and manually run it only when your plants need it.
• Test your sprinkler system routinely to make sure it is operating properly.
• Make sure your rain shut-off device is properly working (all automatic irrigation systems are required to have a rain shut-off device and backflow device).
• Install micro-irrigation in shrub and perennial beds.
• Water in the morning before 8:00 a.m.
• Plant drought-tolerant plants.
• Avoid watering plants frequently; instead make your plants more drought tolerant by increasing the days between watering.
• Decrease the amount of grass in your landscape that serves no practical purpose such as play areas for children and/or pets.
• Accept grass that is not picture perfect.
• Prevent erosion and stormwater runoff and at the same time keep water on site by decreasing hard surfaces and increasing plants, including grass.
• Minimize hard surfaces that are not porous and don’t allow water to percolate through to the soil below.
• Keep rain water on site by diverting your gutters away from driveways and other hard surfaces.
• Create rain gardens and/or swales to collect water during heavy downpours and keep it onsite.
• Catch rain water in rain barrels and cisterns.
• Attend rain barrel class offered by the Extension Service to learn more and purchase your own rain barrel (see upcoming educational classes below).
• Attend Water Opportunities Week event at Florida House on October 23 to learn more about cisterns and the importance of protecting our watershed.
• For more information, visit Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ website at the University of Florida http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/.
• Cactus and succulent gardens can be beautiful too! Visit Sarasota’s succulent garden for ideas.

Special Events:
Master Gardener Plant Sale, Bee Ridge Park, 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. October 9.
Water Opportunities Week event, Florida House, 4454 Beneva Road, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. October 23. Fun activities for the whole family. Free admission.

PLANTING GUIDE
Vegetables & herbs: Basil, beans, beets, Borage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, cucumber, cumin, garlic, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, peas, radish, rutabaga, spinach, strawberries, thyme, tomato, and turnips.
Perennials: Agapanthus, beach buttercup, blue daze, calla lily, Chrysanthemum, cigar plant, Coreopsis, Crinum lily, Dianthus, elephant ears, Gaillardia, Gerbera daisy, iris, Liatris, Pentas, Salvia, Shasta daisy, society garlic, and Verbena.
Fruits in season: Atemoya, avocado, banana, carambola, citrus (calamondin, lemon, and lime), fig, guava, hog plum, kumquat, muscadine grape, papaya, pecan, persimmon, pomegranate, sea grape, sugar apple, and tamarind.
Blooming plants: Allamanda, bird-of-paradise, bottlebrush, Cassia, Cordia, Duranta, dwarf Poinciana, false dragonhead, firecracker plant, firespike, goldenrain tree, oleander, Philippine violet, red and yellow shrimp plants, rouge plant, Plumbago, Salvia, thryallis, Turk’s cap, Thunbergia, and Tibouchina.

Upcoming educational classes:
Call 861-9900 to register for the following classes.
- Landscaping for Birds, Gulf Gate Library, 2:00 p.m. October 1
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. October 2
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard, North Port Library, 6:30 p.m. October 5
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Venice Library, 10:00 a.m. October 7
- Bed Bug Resurgence, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. October 7
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Longwood Park 10:30 a.m. October 9
- Butterfly Predators, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. October 12
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, St. Wilfred Episcopal Church, 3773 Wilkinson Road, 4:00 a.m. October 12
- Irrigation 101, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. October 13
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. October 16
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. October 16
- Ants, Ants, Ants, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. October 19
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. October 21
- Bed Bug Resurgence, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. October 27
- Why Landscapes Fail, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. November 3
- Irrigation 101, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. November 3
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Nine Landscape Principles, North Port Library, 6:30 p.m. November 3
For information

The Master Gardener Help Desk now has an email address: mghelpdesk@scegov.net to answer questions. It is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. You can call (941-861-9807) or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75 with landscape questions. We also have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and every Monday at Gulf Gate Library.

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